DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 078 493 EA 004 990

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TITLE Educational Planning: The Census Bureau Can Help.
PUB DATE 19 Mar 73
NOTE 4p.; Paper presented at American Association of School Administrators Annual Convention (105th, San Francisco, California, March 17-21, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Board of Education Policy; *Census Figures; Demography; *Educational Planning; Futures (of Society); Information Needs; *Information Utilization; Prediction; Speeches; *Student Enrollment

ABSTRACT

The author states that projection of future populations is not feasible because the chief factor in the computations, the birth rate, cannot be predicted with certainty. The paper discusses some national implications, and also suggests that census data by school district can be useful in improving formulas for distribution of federal and State educational funds; providing a base for local school superintendents for planning and policymaking; supporting State educational agency policy planning; relating measures of the ability to finance education to expenditure patterns from other data sources;and providing data for many basic administrative tasks. (Author/WM)

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
105th Annual Convention
San Francisco, Calif. March 17-21, 1973

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TOPIC: EDUCATIONAL PLANNING: THE CENSUS BUREAU CAN HELP

PLACE: Empire Room, Fairmont Hotel

TIME: Monday, March 19, 2:30 p.m.

PROGRAM: Page 39 FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

As we heard in the film, in 1970 we were a Nation of 204 million people. Today, three years later, we number 210 million. By 1975 we will number 217 million and by 2000, around 300 million.

But projecting the future population is a hazardous business because the chief factor in the computations, the birth rate, cannot be predicted with certainty. Death rates are unlikely to change significantly in the next generation. Immigration, which is subject to direct control by legislation, is also unlikely to change in the immediate future.

The variable is the birth rate, but it has been declining since the baby-boom years following World War II and reached an all-time low in 1971 -- 17.2 births per thousand population. There have been a number of recent developments which indicate that the birth rate may continue at its low level or even decline further.

The average age at first marriage for women has gone up in recent years. There has also been some increase in the length of time between marriage and the birth of the first child. But most indicative of the future number of births are the changing attitudes towards family size. The Census Bureau took a survey in 1967 and another in 1972 in which they asked wives how many children they expected to have when their families were completed. The 1967 survey found that the average for wives 18 to 39 years old was 3.1 children. Five years later, wives of the same ages expected to have, on the average, only 2.7 children. And younger wives, those 18 to 24 years, wanted fewer children. The average number they expected to have dropped from 2.9 to 2.4 during the five years. The proportion expecting a one-child, possibly a two-child family, but no larger, increased from 44 to 70 percent.

And then there's that new group we've been hearing about that urges couples to have no children, saying "None is fun."

The 1970 census statistics underscore this growing trend towards smaller families. There were 14 percent fewer children under 5 years of age than in 1960, and 16 percent fewer under one year of age, this even though there were more women of child-bearing ages.

The current drop in elementary school enrollment is, of course, the direct result of the declining birth rate during the 1960's. Elementary school enrollment is expected to decline even further until around 1980 when it is then likely to begin increasing and climb above the current 35 million level.

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However, changes in the number of births during those years can make substantial differences in the numbers of children who will be in the classrooms of later years.

The high school age children of 1980 and 1985 are already here and projections for those years are relatively simple. The nearly 15 million high school students are likely to increase to 16 million by 1975, but the numbers drop off by 1980. Some recovery by 1985 is not ruled out and by 1990 it seems likely that high school enrollments will again be above current numbers.

With our commitment to universal education through high school, and including children of what were formerly considered to be preschool ages, the impact of changes in the number of children of school age on the educational system is an immediate one.

But these are all national figures, and I know you need information on changes in the numbers of school children in your state, your county, city, and school system. And you need more information about them than mere numbers.

The Bureau of the Census can help. The vast store of data from the 1970 Censuses of Population and Housing can give you much information about the children, their families, their housing. And the Bureau can give you the information in several forms: in printed published reports, on computer tape, and in special tabulations with social and economic characteristics cross classified to your specifications. As required by law, all data on tapes, special tabulations, and in published reports that would make it possible to identify an individual or family is suppressed.

Census data by school district can be put to many uses:

1. Improved formulas can be developed for distribution of Federal and State educational funds. In particular, Title I provides over one million a year in financial assistance to local educational agencies for the education of children in low income families. Allocations are made to school districts on the basis of the number of children 5 to 17 years old from families with incomes below $2,000 or under the Program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Heretofore, income data has been obtained by county, and the States have distributed funds within counties on the basis of imperfect data, especially among those several hundred districts that cross county lines. With data aggregated by school district, inequities of allocation may now be reduced.

2. School district data provides an outstanding base for local school superintendents to use in several ways:

   a. Projection of kindergarten and first grade enrollment

   b. Facility and staff planning

   c. School desegregation planning

   d. Dropout prevention planning

e. Vocational educational planning

f. Validation and standardization of the school district's own local census

g. Community involvement planning

3. State educational agency policy planning would be supported in such areas as:

a. Equalization of educational finances

b. Support of nonpublic schools

c. Higher education planning

4. Measures of the ability to finance education can be related to expenditure patterns from other data sources.

5. Basic data would be provided for many purposes:

a. Community profiles of such characteristics as race, sex, age, family composition, educational attainment, occupation, income, employment, value of housing, persons per housing unit or per room.

b. General characteristics of public school students including language spoken at home and age/grade mix for race and income.

c. Family characteristics of public school students including number of siblings, missing fathers, working mothers.

d. Mobility of public school students by birthplace, residence five years ago and change of address in preceding year.

e. Characteristics of teachers and former teachers residing in the community.

f. Dropout characteristics ranging from parental characteristics to race, sex, ethnic and marital status. Attention can be paid to aspects of employment, occupation and income.

g. Comparison of the 4- to 6-year-old population in school with those not in school.

h. Comparison of parochial, private, and public school students with respect to race and socio-economic characteristics.

i. Employment, occupational, and income characteristics of those who have ever taken vocational courses.

j. Characteristics of students in institutions of higher education.

Yes, the 1970 census provides the most comprehensive data base of social and economic information for school administrators, whether the data are obtained in these special compilations for school districts, or in any of the other forms we've talked about.

In closing, I would like to call your attention to publications from the Census Bureau's Governments Division. In them you will find much information about revenue and expenditures -- Federal, State, and local, that may be of interest.

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